9: Boelaert E,M-5 (ca.1945) 1951 FO32 Mongo FO32
Nkundu

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Classificatory Terminology of the Nkundu
[Terminologie classificatoire des Nkundo]

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[Title page]

101 114 [218] The Nkundo [Nkundu], or Mongo, are an important ethnic group of the central basin of the Belgian Congo. They are patriarchal (1). I lived among their west-central tribes for

1. The rules and many details of the classificatory system of the Nkundo have already been set forth in Le Mariage des Nkundo by Father G. Hulstaert (Belgian Royal Colonial Institute, 1938).

20 years.

614 We call a clan, in the ethnic sense, the group of paternal blood relatives who have an autonomous territory in common. This resembles closely what Anglo-Saxon researchers like to call a "lineage" (2).

2. The quotations in this article are from The Pattern of Hera Kinship, by J. F. Holleman (Capetown University Press, for Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, 1949).

I. Wise

601 614 A Nkundo calls his own clan his wise, from the word ise which means "father." My wise thus includes:

1. My paternal grandfather and his brothers and sisters who are called nkoko (pl., bankoko), "grandfather, grandmother."

2. The sons of my male bankoko, including my own father, all of whom are my "fathers" (ise; pl., baise).

The sisters of my "fathers" are my "female fathers" (isomoto, composed of isé and bomoto, "woman").

3. The sons of my "fathers" are my older brothers (botomolo; pl., batomolo) and younger brothers (bokune; pl., bakune). The daughters of my "fathers" are my sisters (nkâna; pl., bankâna).

601 614 The children of my "female fathers" do not belong to my clan.

4. Like my children, the children of my older and younger brothers are my "children" (bona; pl., bana). The Nkundo does not have any special terms for "son" and "daughter." He simply says "male child" and "female child."

5. The children of my "sons" are my grandchildren (bonkana; pl., bankana).

6. The children of these male grandchildren are my great grandchildren (bonkanola; pl., bankanola).

II. Bonyango

The mother's clan is called bonyango, from the word nyango, "mother," and includes:

1. The mother's father and his brothers, who are also nkoko.

2. Their daughters, including my own mother, who are "mothers" (nyango; pl., banyango). The brothers of my "mothers" are my "male mothers" (nyangompame; pl., ba-).

3. The sons and daughters of my "male mothers," who are thus of my generation in our sense but who, to the Nkundo, are my "children," since to them I am legally identified with my mother and therefore I am their "male mother." This explains [602] the unusual and privileged position which I hold in my mother's clan.

4. The children of my "children" are my "grandchildren."

[219] [Table 1 appears here.] [220]

III. Bokanga and Banankana

601 602 A Nkundo has other blood relatives scattered among the clans who have married a woman of his own clan, be it a "female father," a sister, or a daughter. A Nkundo calls all the unrelated members of these clans bokanga. The related members, including children born to the women of his clan, he calls impersonally sisters' children, "children of a sister of the clan" (bonankana; pl.,

[text continues on page 4]

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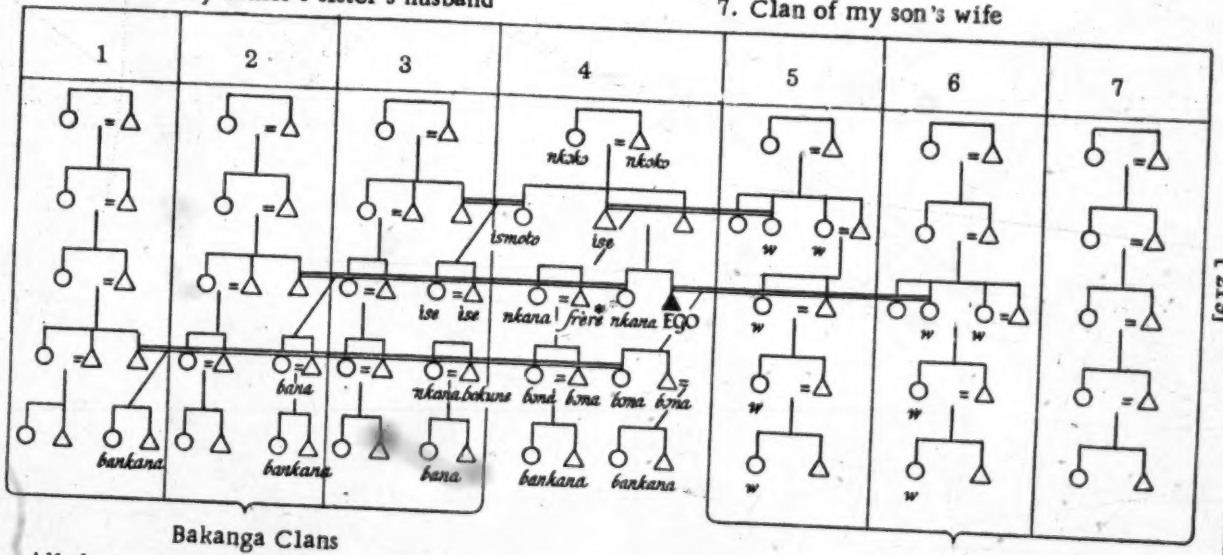
Table 1

Relatives and Affinals through the Paternal Clan

1. Clan of my daughter's husband
2. Clan of my sister's husband
3. Clan of my father's sister's husband
4. My own clan
5. Clan of my father's brother's wife
6. Clan of my wife
7. Clan of my son's wife



Bakanga Clans
All those undesignated = bakanga

Bakilõ Clans
All those undesignated = bakilõ

[*frère = brother IN French]

w = wali (wife)

601 banankana). As a result, the children are legally identified
602 with their mothers. Thus, my sister's child is a child (bona) to me, or a sister's child (bonankana), but to my own child he would be father (ise).

In addition, he has maternal blood relatives, children of my mother's sisters, who are thus his "brothers and sisters," or children of the daughters of his "male mothers." Since these last daughters are his "children," their children would be his "grandchildren." Again, all the members of these clans who are unrelated by blood are his bokanga.

IV. Likilo

601 There are affinal clans which have given wives (wali; pl.,
602 baali) to my clan. This does not, of course, concern my mother's
582 clan, which is a clan related by blood, but rather clans which have given wives, be it to a classificatory "father," to one of their sons, or to one of the sons of the latter. The Nkundo calls all the members of these clans -- with the exception of the woman -- bokilo (pl., bakilo). The Nkundo, merely by marrying a woman, at the same time marries all her legal younger sisters, that is to say, all the bakune [Ed., bankana?] and bana of this woman. Similarly, the woman marries not only a man, but at the same time all his legal younger brothers, that is, all the bakune and bana of this man (except the children of their own union).

601 Just as the clans which have received a wife from my clan thus
602 include bokanga and sisters' sons, so also clans that have given us a wife include bakilo and "wives." Clans which have given a wife to my bonyango follow the same rules.

Comments

121 In several recent studies, especially in South Africa, four
614 rules have been defined which govern classificatory terminology.
602 The first rule is that of the "unity of the lineage": The lineage as a whole is classified as belonging to a particular 'generation'

121 614 602 in its relations to another lineage as a whole" (Holleman, op. cit., p. 9). The author adds, "the unity of the lineage may be broken by a division into affines and cognatic, each with their distinctive terminology, in which the cognatic section is one 'generation' lower than the affinal section" (p. 5.).

121 614 602 601 Just as we speak of a mother society or a sister society, so the Nkundo can also consider an affinal clan as a moral person and speak of his mother's clan as of his mother, of a bokanga clan, of a bokilo clan. I do not think that the term bokanga or bokilo implies an idea of generation when it is applied to an individual, any more than does the French term "parent-in-law," or member of my family-in-law. The Nkundo would certainly not admit what the author cited here writes [221] [Table 2 appears here.] [222] about the Hera: "in inter-lineage relations, ... once the relationship between Ego and any cognatic relative is determined, all the cognates of the same lineage as that relative will bear the same degree of kinship as himself to Ego, regardless of the differences in generation . . . between themselves or as compared with Ego" (p. 5.).

The second rule would be that the clan which provides us a wife (bokilo clan of the Nkundo) is considered our "father," and thus the clan which receives a wife from our clan would be considered a "son." Moreover, among the Nkundo is understood: "We have given you our daughter as a wife, so you are our son." But also implied is: "We have enriched you by our marriage payment, and our children are your "fathers." These ideas, however, are not reflected in the terminology between affinals. Moreover, the fact that the Nkundo readily uses the term bokilo for his bokanga is significant.

Third rule: In lineages directly related to Ego's lineage, "the female line seems to be potentially one 'generation' lower than the agnatic male line" (p. 11). The author tells us that: "This duality is even revealed in agnatic relations . . . Ego calls his . . . father's sister either vatete (father's sister) or hanzwadzi (sister)." Thus, the women of directly related clans would be considered to belong to a lower generation than the men.

[Text continues on page 7]

Table 2

Relatives and Affinals through the Paternal Clan

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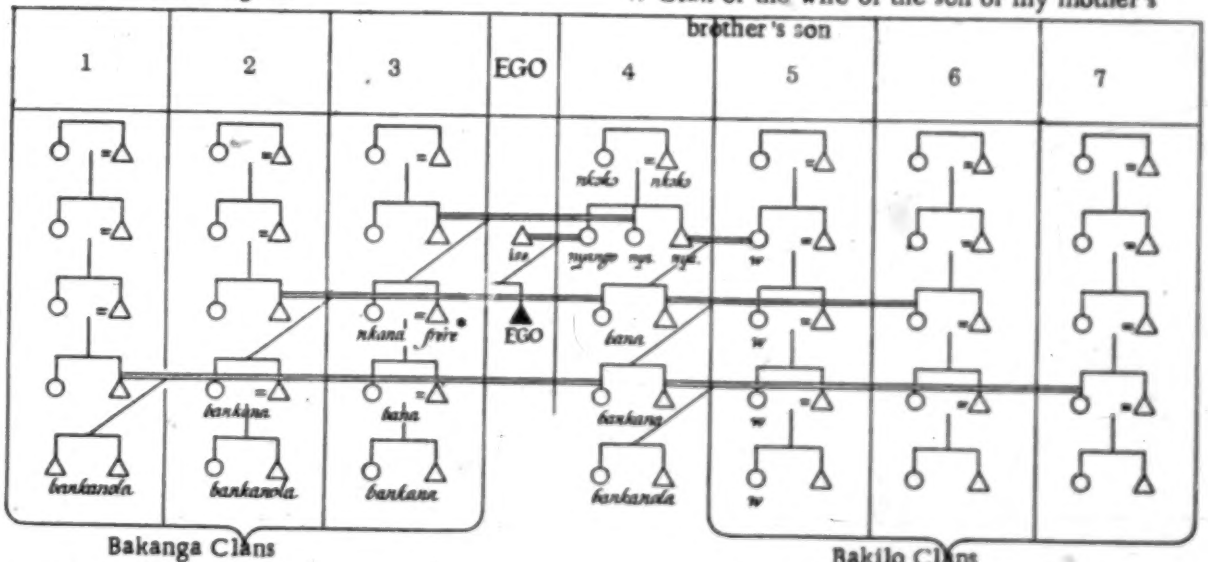
1. Clan of the husband of the daughter of my mother's brother's son
2. Clan of the husband of my mother's brother's daughter
3. Clan of my mother's sister's husband
4. My mother's clan
5. Clan of my mother's brother's wife
6. Clan of the wife of my mother's brother's son
7. Clan of the wife of the son of my mother's brother's son



Bakanga Clans

All those undesignated = bakanga

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Bakilo Clans

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It must be stated that the tables of the bakanga clans presented by the author do not reflect this rule, since all members of these clans not related by blood, males as well as females, are designated as vakwasha- children-in-law. In the bakilo clans the rule seems to be founded on the Hera idea (according to the interpretation of the author) that all the women of my wife's clan are my "wives," no matter what their generation or age. This rule is not applicable to the Nkundo either in ideas or terminology.

There is still the fourth rule which the author quoted here uses often but does not interpret in his tables where it is completely opposed to the second rule: the child is legally identified with its mother. According to the second rule, the child of my father's sister would be my grandchild, and at the same time, according to the fourth rule, it would be my "father."

For the Nkundo, the fourth rule explains how this child is my "father," while the child of my mother's brother is my "child."

One may thus conclude that two rules explain the details of the classificatory system of the Nkundo:

1. In clans which have given a wife to our clan, all the women who are legally younger sisters of this wife, exclusively, are "wives" of all the men, exclusively, who are legally younger brothers of the husband.

2. In clans which have received a wife from our clan, the children born of this wife are identified with their mother by the children of this wife's brothers.